



NEWS

Federal Communications Commission
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FCC AND NCS HIGHLIGHT TELECOMMUNICATIONS SERVICE PRIORITY PROGRAM

Program Ensures Critical Telecommunications Services during National Security Emergencies and Natural Disasters

Washington, D.C. – Today, the staff from the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) and the National Communications System (NCS) made presentations describing the Telecommunications Service Priority Program (TSP). The TSP Program, in place since 1988, was developed to ensure that telecommunications services that are critical to the nation's security and emergency preparedness missions are given priority over other, less critical users. The program is aimed at telecommunications service users, whether they are federal, state, or local government or private industry – so long as they provide services critical to the national security or emergency preparedness capabilities.

The NCS provides assistance to the President and the National Security Council on national security and emergency communications matters. It represents 22 federal departments and agencies, including the FCC. It administers a number of programs that are critical to the nation's defense and emergency telecommunications capabilities, including the TSP program, which is managed in accordance with rules established by the FCC. The FCC also provides oversight and enforcement of the TSP program and resolves appeals.

With the events of last September, the importance of the TSP program has become clearer. With the physical damage to the telecommunications infrastructure in the most concentrated business center in the world, the challenges faced by telecommunications carriers were monumental. The TSP program brought structure to the process and was instrumental in allowing the refurbishment of the facilities and restoration of essential services to proceed in the most expeditious manner.

The limits of the program were also tested by the events of this past September. Specifically, the need for more robust participation by state and local governments and key industries became more apparent. While the NCS has an excellent outreach program with its federal member agencies, it does not have an extensive outreach program for state and local governments. We are developing plans to inform key telecommunications decision-makers about the program. For example, we are discussing the possibility of joint FCC/NCS TSP presentations at future NARUC conferences.

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